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The chaos the Festival of India is

By
SUBBUDU

From its very inception, the Festival of India has had an ignominious start. Priceless idols from sacred temples were taken away for exhibition in France and America with the connivance of the State Governments by Mrs. Pupul Jayakar, the Chairperson of the Festival. Noted archaeologists raised a hue and cry in this regard but all this fell on deaf ears. The mischief had been done. It is common knowledge that there were vested interests in acquiring these ancient sculptures and despite heavy insurance cover and security arrangements, there is every possibility that they may be stolen. God forbid, but if they are lost, they are lost for ever. It is now too late to set matters right.

Tamil Nadu neglected

What is most pathetic is the step-motherly treatment meted out to Tamil Nadu in particular, in having its cultural heritage adequately represented in the Festival. Nadaswaram, the pride of the South, did not find a place in the Festival though its counterpart, the Shehnay, is being represented by Shri Bismillah Khan. After a lot of adverse criticism, the South Indian pipe has been included and *lo and behold*, whom? Not Namagiripettai Krishnan, or Kottur Rajarathinam but *Thiruvizha* Jaisankar from Kerala. I am not trying to link Dr. V. K. Narayana Menon, Chairman of the Sangeet Nataka Akademy and one of the Festival Com-

mittee Members with this selection in order to accuse him of parochialism. But justice is to be seen to be done and for anybody who has eyes, this particular selection would only smack of that.

Take Bharatanatyam. None of the great names in this idiom like Dr. Padma Subramaniam, Sudharani Raghupathy and K. Jayalakshmi are there in the picture. Instead, we have Malavikka Sarukkai, just an up-and-coming artiste, trying to rise to the top; people naturally will attribute this to her Kerala connections.

Carnatic Music ignored

When top artistes like Ravishankar, Ali Akbar Khan, Vilayat Khan and Bhimsen Joshi are being sent abroad in this connection, one would naturally expect Smt. M.S. Subbulakshmi to represent the South. One would like to know whether proper efforts were made to contact her initially and persuade her to accept the assignment. The grapevine has it that her name was not thought of at all but at the last minute she was approached in a pedestrian manner and naturally, she refused. We have top violinists like Laigudi Jayaraman, M. S. Gopalakrishnan and Chandrasekaran. But they have not been considered fit. Pressure tactics may result in inclusion of some of these in due course. But the point is that predictably, the mild-mannered Tamilian has not raised even his little

inger in protest at these slights to the talents of his State.

When even a Rajasthani "bear" is being sent to France and accompanied by host of North Indian dancers like Birju Maharaj, Madhavi, and Jhaveri sisters, there has not been even an effort to try and find a place for the rich folk heritage of Tamil Nadu like "Karagam", "Kavadi" and "Poikkal Kudirai".

I have nothing against the selection of Smt. D. K. Pattammal for the Festival in France. No one can deny her erudition or stature. But due to age and failing health, her voice is no longer what it was. And in the West, a ringing voice is the first perquisite to a singer. How wonderful it would have been if Maharajapuram Santhanam or for that matter, T. N. Seshagopalan with their vibrant voices had been selected!

The Dance Trio's Antics

I now come to the only protest that was aired in the Capital by three dancers, namely, Yamini Krishnamurthy, Sonal Mansingh and Uma Sharma who had not been included in the list. While their anguish was understandable, the venue and the manner of protest were highly deplorable. The Sangeet Natak Akademi had arranged a function to pay homage to the late legendary Bharathanatyam dancer Smt. T. Balasaraswathi. Dr. Menon had billed these three dancers to pay the homage in dance on that occasion. They had agreed and even given the list of items, which were printed in the brochure. The fateful day arrived. The curtain went up and these three dancers, after offering

floral tribute to the portrait of Bala, came to the mike and Sonal Mansingh, the arch-villain of the piece, read out a written statement which read as under:

"We have all gathered here to pay our homage to the memory of Balasaraswathi, the greatest dancer ever produced by this country. Particularly for us dancers, she never ceased to be a source of inspiration and we join you all in paying our humble tribute to the most endearing image of Bala.

However, we regret to inform you that we shall not be participating in the programme being organised by the Sangeet Natak Akademi this evening in view of the uncalled-for observations of its Chairman, Dr. Narayana Menon, in a recent interview on Doordarshan telecast on 11th evening. He feels that the artistes not selected for the forthcoming Festival of India in France and the United States are not up to their quality. It is rather strange that we who are not selected and therefore in his view, have not measured up to the quality, should be invited by the Akademi to pay dance tribute to a dancer of the highest quality. With due respect to the critical acumen of Dr. Menon in the assessment of quality in dancers, we do not wish to desecrate the memory of the great Bala by performing today under the aegis of the Akademi over which he presides. We have taken this difficult and painful decision in the hope that the public will realise that quality is not to be

equated with an arbitrary selection by a few individuals or some hand-picked committee."

Yamini followed, too, and merely regretted the inconvenience caused to the public. When Uma Sharma took the mike, the audience became restive and booed the dancers as they had not behaved. (Yamini has since been invited to perform abroad—Ed.)

A Shabby Way

I got a copy of the entire transcript of the telecast of Mr. Menon and found to my surprise that there was no reference to their quality or calibre in it. It transpired later that both Yamini and Uma had not heard the telecast at all and were roped in by Sonal. I know artistes are impulsive; but was this the occasion, or the way to give vent to their displeasure? The occasion was solemn and surely Bala did not deserve this shabby treatment from them. For their deportment they deserve to be blacklisted for ever.

The most pathetic aspect of the unedifying episode was that Mr. T. Sankaran, brother of Bala, had come all the way to Delhi to prepare a hand-out and a monumental one at that, on Bala. Angered and anguished at this unseemly episode, he issued a statement as under:

"I am afraid the speeches and the manner of the speeches were quite out of tune with the solemnity of the occasion, feminine modesty and the dignity of the art which they want to propagate. Personally, I take it as an

insult to Bala, her tradition, this august gathering and the Sangeet Natak Akademi. The audience made no secret of its utter disgust at this untoward development under the guise of fine arts. I can only feel hurt (and) sorry for what happened and I can't help carrying bitter memories. I really dread to visualise the tribute to Bala in a bigger way later."

Vyjayanthi pitches in

There was also a comical interlude to this sordid affair. Smt. Vyjanthimala Bali provided this. She was assuming Presidency of the Theatre Tamil Nadu, Delhi and held a press conference. Half-way through, a reporter asked what her reaction to the angry protests by Yamini and company was. Pat came the reply: "I entirely agree with them. Artistes are impulsive and do not know Secretariat procedure or protocol. In fact I would have acted in a similar manner". The comedy lay in the fact that she had not even seen the telecast. She made history earlier by asking for the attachment of an air-conditioner coach to the Blue Mountain Express as it caused too much inconvenience for the "poor" public. Hats off to our Tamil Nadu representative in Parliament. Our interests are very safe in her hands.

The time has come when the people of Tamil Nadu and its Government woke up to realities; and instead of engaging in shadow boxing in the garb of Tamil chauvinism, they should do something tangible to keep the flag of Tamil Nadu's great artistic heritage flying aloft.

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The Music of Bharatha Natyam and Concert Music

By

T. SANKARAN

The request for a public discussion came by a strange juxtaposition with an announcement in "The Hindu" dated 30th May '85 of a Music Festival in Durban commemorating the services of Dr. Jon Higgins Bhagavathar; unfortunately, the Yankee vidwan was killed in a motor accident in U.S.A., when he was busy preparing for a concert tour of S. Africa with Guru Dr. T. Viswanathan. He had become a platform musician with the guidance of Viswa in Madras and the U. S. Jon as a researcher was surprised to find that there is no publication in the Indian Vernaculars or even in foreign languages on the Music of Bharatha Natyam; hence his thesis for the Ph. D. Degree was the Music of Bharatha Natyam.

His association with Viswa and Ranga and their sister Bala Saraswati gave him all the facilities he needed and Bala's dance-master, K. Ganesan, from the same household, gave him practical insight into the technique of conducting dance recitals. The result was the completion of the doctoral thesis in *English* in precise language explaining the technical terms of a cross-cultural experience. The unambiguous elucidation of the term "Teermanam" for example, its *modus operandi*, the role of the various participants in "The Chinna Melam" or dance orchestra, is an achieve-

ment worthy of legitimate pride. Jon had rubbed shoulders with the top brass of Karnataka bani in the Tyagaraja Festival but no 'general practitioner' of vocal or drumming can dovetail into a "China Melam"—the dance orchestra—however eminent in the music field.

Maestros of the calibre of Palghat Mani Iyer, Palani Subramania Pillai, Palghat Raghu etc. used to be enthralled by the drumming of Kanchipuram Kuppaswamy Mudaliar in Bala's orchestra,—'Kuppanna' the solitary Awardee of the Sangit Nataka Academy for drumming in dance recitals. Wonder of wonders! Jon rose to the occasion in an emergency at a Delhi concert by Bala when her accompanist failed to arrive on time. Jon was by then an accomplished "bhagavathar" but he had studied the repertoire of Bharatha Natyam and had also been trained and rehearsed as a chorister.

Woman Choristers

The present generation remembers Jayammal, Bala's mother, as a seasoned vocalist making capital of the padam heritage of her mother Dhanammal. She was a pioneer in this enterprise of enthusing women singers to take advantage of their voices as choristers. M. S. Subbulakshmi and M. L. Vasanthakumari followed in the footsteps when the occasion arose, in due

course. Women choristers added a new dimension to Natyam where music became the major partner.

Thanks are due to Kandappa Nattuvanar, the Guru of Bala, for drafting Jayammal into his orchestra as a means for reforming dance traditions and for interpreting the traditions of his forefathers viz., the Tanjore Quartette, with that of Vina Dhanammal.

Male Singers

Anterior to Kandappa's generation, the choristers were all men who were obliged to shout themselves hoarse at a pitch beyond their reach. They had to be audible to the dancers and the audience in the absence of sound amplification. Otherwise, the Nattuvanars of the eminence of Pandanallur Minakshisundaram Pillai, Sangitha Kalanidhi Prof. K. Ponniah Pillai, Kandappa Nattuvanar, Karaikkal Swaminatha Nattuvanar, were eminent choristers. Minakshisundaram Pillai was a composer and also the Guru of Konerirajapuram Vaidyanatha Iyer. The late Keertanacharya C. R. Srinivasa Ayyangar considered Prof. K. Ponniah Pillai to be the solitary 'Sangita Vidwan' worth his salt because he was proficient in Gita, Vadya and Nrtya.

Music in Motion

Dhanammal's family had forsworn dancing for nearly three generations after Dhanammal's grand-mother Kamakshi Ammal, the Tanjore Palace Dancer. The padam tradition of Dhanammal added lustre to dance music and Bala was permitted to pursue the dancing career. *Dancing was and is only music in motion and never an independent entity.* Dhanam-

mal and Jayammal had spurned lucrative offers from Messrs. S. S. Vasan and Uday Shankar, for they feared that films and group dancing would adversely tell upon their music accent.

The repertoire

Dance music has, however, an individuality even though it is Karnatic music pure and unalloyed. The genius of the Tanjore Quartette systematized a repertoire, composed necessary songs and made a psychological approach from the simple to the complex physical movements based on their temple and palace experience. The Padam, Thillana, and Ragamalika are common to music and dance programmes but the Sabdam, which is the 3rd item of the dance repertoire adorns music recitals as neraval and calls for great skill and imagination from vocalists, nattuvanars and dancers as well.

From Alarippu to Thillana and beyond it is a progression from the simple to the complex. Each item grows out of the previous item for complete integration, the starting point being the Alarippu. Skipping an item or changing the order of the items is just sheer ignorance of the psychology of the repertoire. Elementary physical movements in a dancer's style complete salutation of the Guru, Mother Earth and the audience. Jatiswaram is a brisk musical trot calling for rest in the forthcoming Sabdam in Kambodhi/Mishram. This is the calm before the storm of the Varnam which has built-in provision for stress and rest in the swara passages and Sahitya passages alternately. The repose of the Padam and Javalis rests the dancer and also the audience. The brisk final of the Thillana is a thrilling conclusion.

Omission or alteration of the sequence of items is neither in the interests of the dancer nor aesthetic appeal. There is adequate provision for bhakthi and Stringara is the right vehicle for mimetic expression.

Even the initial Alarippu with bare tala syllables is bhakthi-laden like pure notes or Swaram without any textual significance. Bhakthi is an integral part of Sruti and laya and cannot be extraneous to either of these ingredients of music. Great savants have made this approach clear in hymns: "ஓசையாலாய் ஓலியுமாலாய்". God manifests himself in absolute sound. Laya or Rhythm is the life blood of dance.

Mela Prapti

The Musical prelude in traditional dance programmes is the Mela Prapti which has totally gone out of vogue. Behind the curtains, the Mela Prapti prepared the audience for the aesthetic atmosphere; the loud beats of the dance master's cymbals and the mridangam used to execute a sequence in the Khanda jati; the Todaya Mangalam "Jaya Janaki Ramana" in the Nattai ragam signalled the auspicious commencement of the dance. The modern facilities for sound amplification and stage lighting have in a way been the Waterloo of the Mela Prapti which heralded the danseuse to the concert platform. The preliminary musical exercise, besides creating an aura of expectancy, silenced the audience imperceptibly.

Mallari

The parallel tradition in Nagaswaram is the ritual in temples when the 'Utsavar' steps out in procession. The Mallari (without sahityam) built out of solfa syllables

in the Nattai ragam is inescapable in some degree or other amidst modern bustle. The Alarippu played on the Taval in the Khanda jati initiates the Mallari. The Alarippu on the Taval is not to be confused with the Alarippu in dance recitals. The loud Taval beats prepare everyone for the divine procession. The palanquin bearers resting in the various corners of the temple before the procession are aroused; the devotees scattered all over the locality get ready for welcoming the Lord and propitiating him with Karpooara Harathi etc.

The Mela Prapti is unknown to most of the modern Nattuvanars. It is doubtful if they have heard of it.

Rehearsals

The rehearsals for the performance (Silambam) are as strenuous as the performance and may well compare with a military drill calling for precision and co-ordination among the nattuvanars, the chorists, the drummer and dancer. The cymbals, the nattuvanar's verbal recital of the solfa syllables, the drummer's fingers, the dancer's feet, the rhythm of the songs by the choristers, require perfect synchronization. The understanding between the miming dancer and the singing choristers must be perfect so that the musicians know the number of repetitions and remain alert for improvisation in Sanchari Bhavam; and their music should catch the ears of the danseuse without forcing her to turn round often to get the proper cue.

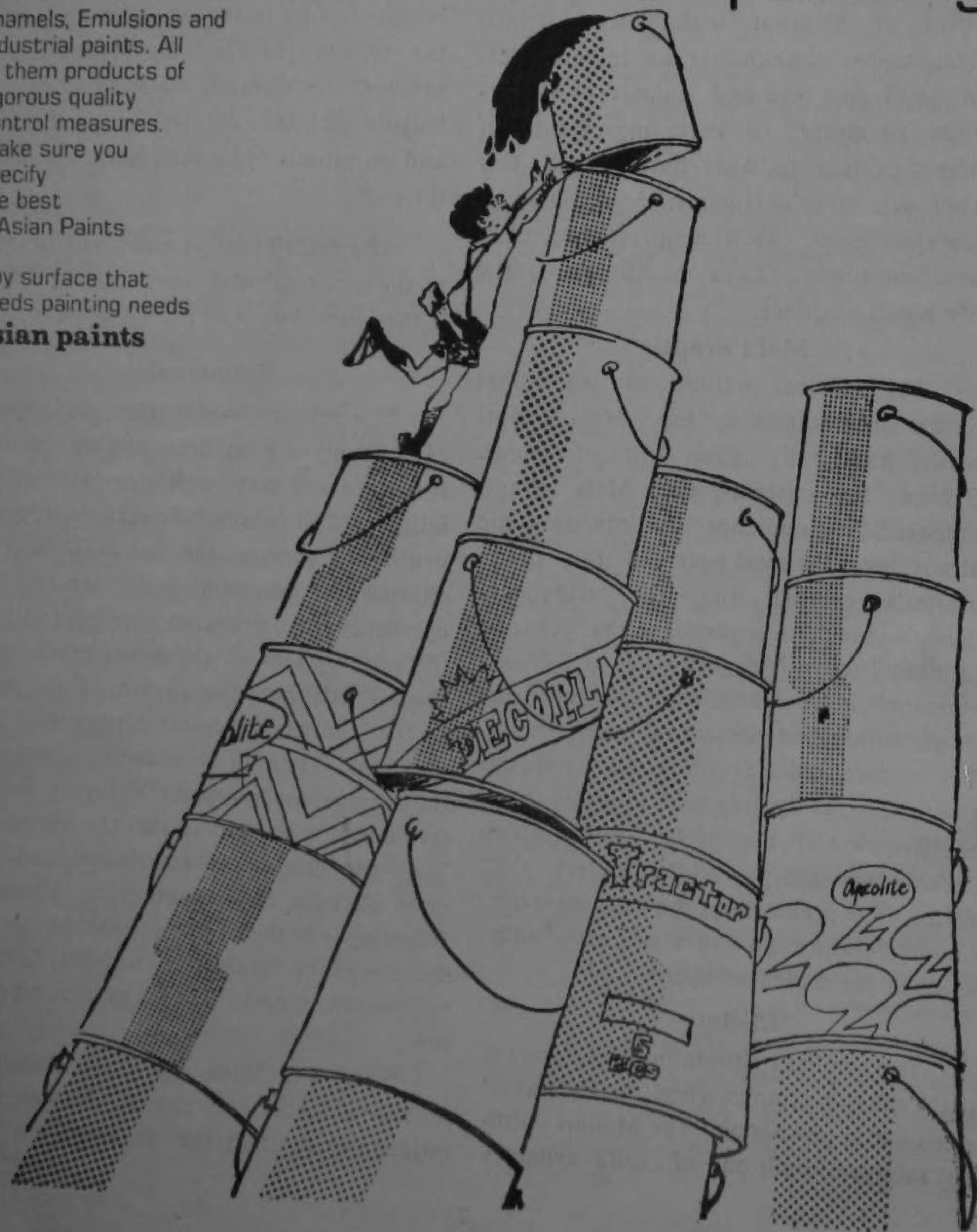
In bygone days, there was adequate provision for a 'tani avarthanam' on the mridangam so that the drummer has an

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opportunity to demonstrate his individuality, while resting the dancer at the same time. The late Alaganambi Pillai was a class by himself on the dance orchestra until he moved to the concert platform with his honeyed fingers.

Mylapore Gowri Ammal was a pioneer in singing while dancing and Bala became a worthy pupil of this mentor. The Kalyani daughters, like some of their lesser known contemporaries, used to sing parts of the Varnam and the Slokam in full.

Short Cuts

The more than century-old dance repertoire symposed and systematized by the Tanjore Quartette is still relevant. The kritis of the Trinity have their legitimate place in concert music but are of doubtful relevance on the dance stage. The present day tendency is to seek short cuts to success on the dance stage and for quick popularity. Anxious parents who are in a position to arrange a debut of their offspring in the distinguished presence of some VIP prevail upon the dance teachers to co-operate on this short cut to fame.

Several circumstances play into their hands. The press and also a few well-meaning enthusiasts carried on a propaganda for cutting down the duration of Varnams to 10 or 15 minutes as the old one hour long Varnam tried their patience; and in the name of bhakthi and cultivation of devotion eschewing the Sringara of the Pada Varnam, Pancharathna Kritis and Dikshitar Kritis like "Ananda Natana Prakasam" began to elbow out the Varnams. The comparative ease of drilling the dancers in mechanical footwork made them choose Tana Varnam in place of Pada Varnams. They forget that the Pada Varnams have built-in provision for alternating stress and

rest in the Swara and Sahitya passages respectively.

The cloak of classicism has been given to Kavuthuvams from temple rituals.

Inadequate Preparation

Injustice is done to the art and the new generation of dancers, mostly by over-zealous parents. The dancers forfeit their right to sensitive music. Such a situation is inescapable when Natyam is proliferating in epidemic form. It is distressing to see several dancers being ignorant of the ragam and talam of the songs in their programme. With no tradition behind them, they are denied the benefit of a music education, even in an elementary form.

Some of the neo-dancers execute the rhythm of Thillanas even if in a mechanical routine because Thillanas provide a thrilling finale and some even agree to change the order of the repertoire to perform the Thillana as the first item of the programme!

The dance recitals are publicised as 'Oriental Dances'—in India! and the label is justified by the odd inclusion of items like 'Marwari', 'Kurathi' and costumes proclaim the identity of the item as in dramas.

Great pains, effort, time and money are invested in training dancers and the children are sure to acquire an adequate sense of music if the sponsors, be they parents or teachers, are patient enough to devote equal attention to music, as part of Natyam. Bad background music, more often than not, turns away the audiences from natya performances. An overcrowded or-chestra with instruments that can't be tuned only produces chaotic music. Yet ears unaccustomed to Indian music have mastered it along with dance.

Jayanthi Festival of the Trinity-Tiruvarur

The Sangeetha Mummurthi Jayanthi Festival held at Tiruvarur from 2nd to 22nd April 1985 is a milestone in the millennial history of our musical heritage. The fact that Sri Syama Sastri (1762), Sri Tyagaraja (1767) and Sri Muthuswami Dikshithar (1776) were born in this "Southern Kailas" is itself enough to prompt a shared set of benign emotions on a vast scale. And when Sri Jagadguru Sankaracharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam, Sri Jayendra Saraswathi Swamigal, constituted a Carnatak Sangeetha Seva Trust to collect funds for the renovation of the birth places of the Trinity and entrusted it to a Committee with Padma Sri Lalgudi Jayaraman as Convenor and chief instrument of the drive, the whole world took notice and joined in rectifying a serious lapse viz., the sad and culpable neglect of the holy premises in which the three great geniuses of India were born. (Such neglect of its maestros would be unthinkable in any Western nation).

Memorials

The question "Why renovate the old and dilapidated buildings? Or, why not put up some other memorial to them?" may be asked. The answer is not only that those hallowed premises are so sacrosanct in Indian eyes; but "there is an instinctive and involuntary effort of the mind to present an image or thought in 3 dimensions that belong to a solid", as Dr. O. W. Holmes pointed out; hence the great temples, mausoleums etc. that

mankind is fond of erecting. Does not Sri Tyagaraja's Samadhi facade give us a sense of monumental occasion when we visit it, thanks to Nagarathnam Ammal's urge to build it and not let it be overgrown with grass, moss and bush?

Magnificent Response

The Trust's appeal for funds evoked a fairly spontaneous response not only from all over India, but the Middle East, U.K., U.S.A., Canada, Malaysia etc. Most contributors considered the renovation of the Trinity's houses as an opportunity to bring about a renaissance in Carnatic Music and as proof of a belief in (what Andre Malraux would have called) "the mysterious redemptive powers of art." In Bombay, the Sri Shanmukhanandha Fine Arts and Sangeetha Sabha, spearheaded a powerful drive for funds resulting in a catch of over Rs. 3 lakhs, collected partly through a mini-festival featuring Dr. Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, Mandolin U. Srinivas and a Jugalbandhi with Lalgudi and Amjad Ali Khan, the sarod maestro.

So, too in the Southern States, Lalgudi's persuasive efforts succeeded in netting over Rs. 7 lakhs. The total collections were well over the target of Rs. 10 lakhs, and the Trustees decided to observe the Jayanthis of the Trinity on the due dates in their houses at Tiruvarur. The Muthuswami Dikshithar Jayanthi was observed on 26th March 85, in the already renovated birthplace with concerts by Messrs.

D. K. Jayaraman and B. Rajam Iyer. Sri Syama Sastri's Jayanthi was held in his house on 22nd April '85 with a number of well-known musicians—Dr. N. Ramani, Smt. Mani Krishnaswami, T. V. Sankaranarayanan, Smt. Radha Jayalakshmi, Trichur Ramachandran, Master U. Srinivas (Mandolin), Sri P. S. Narayanaswami, Sri Nedunuri Krishnamurthi, and R. Pichumani (Veena), all with suitable accompaniments, Sri Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer could not participate in the festival.

Inauguration & After

Sri Thyagaraja's Jayanthi commenced on 27th April '85 at his renovated house (see pic. Page) with Maharajapuram Sathanam's concert. Dr. M. L. Vasanthakumari, Dr. S. Ramanathan, Dr. Balamurali Krishna, and others filled out a two-day festival. For the benefit of music lovers who could not attend, both Doordarshan and All India Radio recorded and relayed their concerts in instalments for many weeks, during and after the Festival. To the credit of these media, it must be said that these transmissions conveyed the flavour of the occasion well enough to bestir lively emotions.

The Inaugural Ceremony itself was a colourful one. Shri T. P. Tewary, Lt. Governor of Pondicherry delivered the inaugural address (vide picture on the cover) that contained some thoughtful sentiments—e.g. "Nad has been elevated to the highest position so much so that it bears the suffix of 'Brahm' in the compound word of 'Nadabrahmam'..... Perhaps nowhere else celestial persons are so closely associated with musical

instruments. Indian music is unique in its depth, melody and variety. The concepts of Bhav, Swar, Laya, Thala are among the highest accomplishments of the human race in the field of fine arts. As the origin of music was divine and its practice was dedicated to the service of the Lord, it inspired the persons who practised it and those who listened to it."

Shri Tewary concluded his inspiring address by saluting the great "Sadhana", of the Trinity and expressed his happiness that the financial target had been achieved..."but the collection of Rs. 10 lakhs is the beginning of a great endeavour and the noble work has to be continued. We hope and pray that our spiritual tradition of thousands of years should continue unblemished and should blossom forth still more".

Beautiful Souvenir

Shri R. Soundararajan, Minister for Housing and Local Administration (T.N.), also made appropriate remarks extolling the sanctity of the efforts of the Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peeta Carnataka Sangeetha Seva Trust. The Minister also released the beautiful Souvenir prepared for the occasion. It contains particulars of the Trust's activities besides short and crisp articles on the Trinity's life and work by eminent men. The Souvenir has a beautifully designed cover of multi-colour depicting the famous decorated Tiruvarur car (Rath), the equally famous Kamalalaya Tank and of course, the great temple in the background. S. Rajam's pictures illustrating a few kritis of the Trinity and giving pictorial meaning to them are very original and attractive features of the Souvenir.

In his concise report as Trustee, Sri Lalgudi Jayaraman, has traced the origin and development of the renovation programme and after expressing his great good fortune in being asked by H. H. the Sankaracharya of the Kanchi Kamakoti Peeta to raise funds for the noble cause, concluded thus:

"It is the earnest desire of the Trust that these Houses should be handed down to the future generations of music lovers and artistes as sacred centres for preserving and propagating the precious heritage, which have been left to us by the Trinity..... The houses of the Trinity would serve as pilgrimage centres for inspiring future generation of music lovers and preserving the grand edifice of Carnatic Music".

Artists' Co-operation

Sri Jayaraman has gratefully acknowledged in the Souvenir the considerable assistance he received from everyone, not least, the artistes who made the Festival a success, without taking remuneration. The maximum physical comforts were provided to them. The Trustees were indebted to Sri V. T. Somasundaram, who supplied accommodation for all the artistes and other invitees, while the family members of Shri V. S. T. Mudaliar hosted the artistes. The Trustees also looked after the convenience of the artistes who took part in the festival, especially in providing transport from and to the Railway Station and also for visiting the Trinity's houses.

The need for these special arrange-

ments emphasises the relative backwardness of Tiruvarur at present in transport, boarding and lodging and the need for the Tamil Nadu Tourist Corporation to provide facilities for the Tourists on a scale befitting its importance, as a centre for pilgrimage, now heightened by the renovation of the Trinity's birthplaces. For example, next year's Jayanthi celebrations are bound to be on a large scale, with much larger public attendance (a la Tiruvaiyaru) and the Trustees have already taken a decision to have the concerts in the huge precincts of the temple of Lord Tyagaraja. Tourism will surely increase and the Centre and State Agencies, one hopes, will lose no time in closing the awful lacuna in lodging and boarding facilities.

Future Plans

To invest the renovated premises of the Trinity with the significance of a museum, the Trustees propose to assemble a useful library of books and treatises on music, besides having their life incidents painted on the walls. Some old Vidwans may also be honoured every year, with financial support, too, provided if possible. The hallowed premises of the Trinity are being looked after by permitting three separate agents to reside with their families and by giving them suitable remuneration etc. They will also receive visitors and show them round.

Grudging Praise

So much of impressive spade work has been done and the inauguration and festival have been such a brilliant prelude to a great action that one cannot but regret the tardy recognition, by some, of the efforts of the Trustees, particularly those of

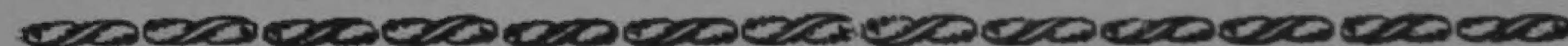
Sri Lalgudi and Sri R. Yagnaraman. The foot-and-mouth brigade of musicians who talk loosely have not been idle and frivolous complaints against the Festival have been aired. Agatha Christie has said in her autobiography that "there is a terrible kink in one's disposition that tends always to kick against anything that is too right or too perfect". Messrs. Lalgudi Jayaraman,

Yagnaraman & their colleagues have completed a great job and deserve to be highly complimented on the success of their mission. Rather perhaps, they may recall the anguished cry of Van Gogh, one of the greatest painters :

"One may have a blazing hearth in one's soul, and yet no one ever comes to sit by it".

To earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty; to find the best in others; to leave the world a bit better—This is to have succeeded.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson.



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By

T. S. PARTHASARATHY

(The April 1985 issue of the 'SHANMUKHA' carried K. S. M's excellent coverage of the Sangeet Natak Akademi's Annual Awards 1984 presentation ceremony & Festival of Dance, Drama and Music held at the T. T. Krishnamachari auditorium of the Madras Music Academy from February 23 to March 1, 1985. The functions, which were held in association with the Music Academy and the Tamilnadu Eyal Isai Nataka Manram, were the most colourful and memorable events in the annals of performing arts in Madras. The galaxy of Awardees gave of their best during the festivals and the elite of Madras witnessed performances which they would have missed but for the Music Academy's invitation to the S.N. Akademi to hold the twin functions in its cosy T. T. K. auditorium.

But the most exquisite and heart-warming performance was 'Shakuntala', the dance-drama in the Manipuri dance style, directed by Singhajit Singh and presented by the Triveni Ballet of the Triveni Kala Sangam of New Delhi. Singhajit Singh comes from a distinguished family of traditional artistes and is an outstanding performer and choreographer of Manipuri dance. Singh received training in Manipuri dance from some of the most eminent Gurus of the time like Guru Amubi Singh and Guru Chaoba Singh. As Madras had not witnessed classical Manipuri dance for more than a decade, 'Shakuntala' came as a revelation to hundreds of its viewers. An attempt is made in this article to explain the salient features of traditional Manipuri dance.)

"Dancing is the loftiest, the most moving, the most beautiful of the arts because it is no mere translation or abstraction from life : it is life itself. It is the only art of which we are the stuff" says Havelock Ellis. Tamilnadu gave Bharata Natyam to the world and lovers of dance in Madras have been witnessing the cream of it during the last five decades. Thanks to recent attempts made to have cultural exchanges between the various states of India, we sometimes see good performances of Odissi, Kathak and even Kathakali. Madras appears to have become the second home for Kuchipudi. The only dance form which is yet to make

an impact on South Indian audiences is the classical dance of Manipur.

The reasons are not far to seek, Manipur, a jewel of natural beauty, is tucked away amidst the hills on the north eastern borders of India, adjacent to Burma, and is not connected by rail. Dancing in Manipur was never considered as a form of entertainment but in theme and spirit, it is the embodiment of Bhakti at its purest. A mystical rapture appears to seize Manipuri dancers when they do the Raasa dance after midnight at the Govindaji temple at Imphal and one has to see it to believe it.

Most of the Gurus of Manipur are shy to come out of the State and many of them can speak only Manipuri which is not understood in the other parts of India. Recently, however, some of them speak good English and Hindi. The background music is in Bengali, Brajabuli or Manipuri and the accompanying instruments like the Pung, the Mridanga and the Pena can be played only by Manipuri players. The costumes and stage decor are also typically Manipuri.

The Classical Style

Apart from a few tribal or folk dances of the pre-Vaishnavite period, the Manipuri dance is classical in the main. The science of this style is explained in the Sanskrit treatise "Govinda Sangita Lila Vilasa", attributed to king Bhagyachandra (also known as Jayasimha) (1764-1789)—contemporary of the Trinity of South India—whom the Manipuris call as 'Rajarshi'. This treatise has been printed in the Bengali script (now used in Manipur) by the Sri Govindaji Nartanalaya, Imphal, with a Manipuri translation by Pandit Brajabihari Sharma and an English introduction by Prof. E. Nilakanta Singh. The story goes that king Bhagyachandra had a vision of Lord Govindaji (Krishna) performing the Raasa Lila with the Gopis and he wanted to translate his dream into a reality. There is, however, a controversy in Manipur about the authenticity of the treatise although it is written in chaste Sanskrit and is the only work in which the present day exclusive practices of Manipuri dance have been defined. The controversy, therefore, does not invalidate the importance of the work which lays down clearly the scope of this dance style. The rulers

of Manipur ruled the state as representatives of Lord Govinda, the presiding deity, just like the rulers of Travancore who considered themselves as 'Padmanabha Dasas'.

The Treatise

For many years, scholars in Manipur were in search of the authority on which the distinctive classical heritage of Manipuri dance was based. Research scholars avidly scrutinized the Natya Sastra of Bharata, the Abhinaya Darpana of Nandikesvara, the Sangita Ratnakara of Sarngadeva and works like the Sangita Damodara of Subhankara and Sangita Sarasangraha of Ghanashyam Das. No dance tradition in India can, of course, claim complete freedom from the Natya Sastra. In fact, eminent Manipuri scholars like Panditaraja Atombapu Sharma attempted to interpret classical Manipuri dance from the standpoint of Bharata Muni's classic but the soul of the peculiar Manipuri tradition was not to be found in any of the works.

Heaps of manuscripts on dance were reported to be lying concealed in the Manipur area and one such was rescued and taken to Bombay by Guru Bipin Singh. It was stated to be from the house of late Rupa Vira Chandra, a royal priest of Maharaja Chandrakirti (c 1851 A. D.). The manuscript, written in the old Bengali script on Meithei paper, was deciphered and published by the Sri Govinda Nartanalaya as already mentioned above. The Manipuri language has a script of its own, known as the Meithei Mayek but after the advent of the Gaudiya type of Vaishnavism in Manipur, the

Bengali script came to be adopted even for writing Manipuri. The Manipuris of the valley call themselves 'Meitheis' after the fashion of the people of Thailand who are known as 'Thais'. The Manipuri language belongs to the Sino-Tibetan group but has become highly Sanskritized after the adoption of Vaishnavism as the State religion. Even today Manipuri men and women invariably wear the Vaishnavite caste mark on their foreheads like the followers of the Gaudiya tradition. The dances of Manipur are called by the local people by the generic name 'Meithei Jagoi'.

Chitraratha Tradition

The Govinda Sangita Vilasa comprises 1220 slokas and is divided into two chapters, viz. the Nartana Adhyaya and the Tala Adhyaya. The work appears to be incomplete as the Prabandha Adhyaya is missing and 23 slokas are found in the middle of the book dealing with Nritya and Nritya. The book opens with a salutation to Lord Govinda :

"Yad vilasa vasadvisvam chaturdha-
bhinayatmakam
Vivartate sa Govindo vibhuh vijaya-
tetaram".

In the second sloka the Lord is aptly described as 'Rasesvara' (the Lord of all Rasas) and the book proceeds to trace the origin of dance. Vishnu first created the 'Nritya' in Ekarnava and taught it to Brahma, and at the request of Indra, Brahma taught the art to Chitraratha, the lord of the Gandharvas, Bharata and Garga Muni. Chitraratha taught Arjuna, who in turn taught the dance to Uttara, daughter of the King of Virata and later to the maidens of Dvaraka. Two other tradi-

tions are also mentioned - one in which Siva taught the art to Tandua and Uma (which gave rise to the Tandava and Lasya styles) and another in which Gargacharya taught the dance to his disciple Krishna who later taught the art to the Gopis.

It would appear that the work is mostly based on the Nartana Vartika of Chitraratha and the Rasa Prakasa of Gargacharya but both these works are not extant now. King Bhagyachandra says that he "wrote the work to explain the tradition of the old dance masters of Manipur" (Manipuravasi puratana nartanavit saampradayika acharyaih upadishtartha yatate darsayitum Bhagyachandra simhoyam.) He pays homage to Adi Bharata as well as to Garga, Narada and Chitraratha. His main purpose appears to be to promote the joy born of Sankirtana (Sankirtana ananda vivardhanaya). In Manipur songs are not merely sung but are accompanied by dancing. Hence the Manipuri musician singing kirtans is called a 'Nata' who is expected to know the four kinds of abhinaya. The kirtan is thus known as 'Nata kirtana' and is a highly stylised form of singing and dancing, closely associated with the cultural life of every Manipuri Vaishnava. The Nata musicians execute graceful and complicated body movements known as Cholom (chalanam) with cymbals and the Pung (the Manipuri Mridangam) and sing songs set to ragas with the characteristics of Padavalis. In Manipur, the invocational playing of the drums is also called 'raga' besides the melodies sung. Strangely enough, a song is called 'Isei' in Manipuri and scholars

like Kirti Singh accept the Dravidian contribution which gave Manipur the water transport, pottery, worship of goddesses and the music.

Special Features

The classification of the Tandava style into Cholom, Gunthanam and Prasaranam and the Lasya style into Seemitanga and Sphuritanga is nowhere to be found except in the Manipuri dance. It may therefore be described as the Nartana Vartika tradition of Chitraratha coupled with the Garga Muni tradition as distinguished from the Natya Sastra tradition. It does not, however, mean a different terminology. There are many items which are shared in common by almost all dance treatises as they should be under the Indian classical heritage. But the distinctive pattern of movements of the Manipuri dance is somehow off the main track of the Natya Sastra tradition. The non-availability of the Nartana Vartika stands in the way of a proper assessment of the classical heritage of Manipur. Some works mention the celestial Gandharvas not only as divine musicians but also as the progenitors of Indian dance, but it is only Bhagyachandra's work that singles out the Gandharva chief Chitraratha as the author of the Manipuri tradition. The work, however, does not contain any quotations from other works but hammers out new expressions to refashion the great and continuing tradition of the Manipuri acharyas.

Tandava, Lasya and Natya

As already mentioned, Tandava has been divided into Chalanam, Gunthanam and Prasaranam and Lasya into Seemitanga

and Sphuritanga, - terms not found in any other work on dance. The Govinda Sangita Lila Vilasa describes in detail the various movements involved in these forms in poetic language. The Seemitanga is described as "soft movements like waves at the touch of a light breeze" (Yatra gati vinayasalini manda maruta samjata tarangasyeve manthara) and Sphuritanga at "the upper parts of the body moving like creepers" (Yatra dolayate purvakayo valliva nartana). These movements are beautifully depicted by competent Manipuri dancers.

Natya is divided into Rupaka and Rasaka. The latter elaborately describes the Bhagavata tradition and the Radha-Krishna Lila of Brindavana and these are still followed in the Raasa dance of Manipur of great sanctity; The book contains a mine of information regarding head gestures, hastas, karanas, neck-positions, wrist movements (manibandha), knee poses and charis (movements of the feet). There are also characteristic movements known as 'Chaali' with which a dancer begins the performance, and other movements called Gatibhanga, Bhramari, Bangavali and many kinds of stepping. Despite the unfortunate controversy about its authenticity, the Govinda Sangita Lila Vilasa deserves the dispassionate study of all interested in the Manipuri dance.

Tala

The classification of Talas follows the traditional pattern viz. the tala dasa pranah, and there is no difference from other works. But the talas mentioned as having

been used by the old masters of Manipuri dance total 116 desi talas from Ektala to Tala patanga. The present gurus of the Manipuri Pung (Mridanga) claim that about 40 of these are still being used by them while the remaining have gradually gone into oblivion by disuse.

The old and the new

According to one classification there were six kinds of dance in Manipuri (1) Lai-haraoba (2) Nata pala kirtans (3) Raasa (4) Sansemba (5) Khubak Isei and (6) Folk dances. The Lai-haraoba and Raasa-lila are the most important forms of Manipuri dance. The word 'Lai' means God and 'Lai-haraoba' means 'ritualistic dance-drama'. The origin of this dance is lost in obscurity but it is the basis of the modern Manipuri school of dancing. It is essentially lyrical and has graceful and soft movements and steps. But scholars are of the opinion that the Lai-haraoba was transformed beyond recognition into Raasa by king Bhagyachandra.

But it is the Raasa-lila of Manipur that occupies the pride of place among its dances and has drawn the attention of many a connoisseur including Rabindranath Tagore who adopted some of its aspects in his dance-dramas. He also wrote an exquisite poem called 'Chitrangada' about the mythological princess of Manipur who consorted with Arjuna and gave birth to Babhruvahana. The Raasa, which is the epitome of Manipur classical dance, is religious to the extent that only Manipuri Vaishnavas are allowed to enter the Raasa mandala and non-Manipuris have to stand outside it. It is only in this

dance that the richness of both Nritta and abhinaya of the Manipuri dance can be seen. The Raasa is divided into Maha-raasa, Kunja-raasa, Vasanta, Nitya-raasa, Diva-raasa, Nartana-raasa, Ashta-Gopi and Ashta-Syam and these are performed during different months of the year. The art attains the same level of perfection and stylisation as any of the other developed dance-drama forms of India. The compositions are of a high literary order set to classical music and performed to a given metrical cycle.

The literature of these raasa dances is Vaishnavite but at the same time, it gives full scope to the actors to present the various Nayikas of the Indian aesthetic tradition and the several Sthayibhavas mentioned in the Natya Sastra. The Raasa dances thus constitute the most significant portion of the Manipuri repertoire. Dancing in Manipur is intimately connected with the religious life of its people. Towards the close of a Sankirtana, the rasikas rush to the mandala and lie prostrate before the artistes weeping and sobbing. As a theatre spectacle, Manipuri has a delicate grace and beauty and it is full of the intricate complexities of sinuous curves.

A treasure unearthed

The credit of introducing Manipuri dance to the outside world goes to the Jhaveri sisters of Bombay (Nayana, Ranjana, Suverna and Darshana) who were visiting Manipur regularly from 1948 for study, research and performances. They learnt the dance from the main Gurus of the style and in 1972 they founded, in collaboration with Guru Bipin Singh, the

Manipuri Nartanalaya at Imphal, Calcutta and Bombay. The Nartanalayas have rendered yeoman service to Manipuri dance by arranging teaching, performing, conferences and publication of books in English, Bengali and Hindi.

In 1963 the Triveni Kala Sangam of New Delhi set up a Manipuri dance group headed by Singhajit Singh who was already on the staff of the Sangam for promoting the Manipuri style of dance. He has composed twenty full length dance-dramas and several other choreographic works. He is responsible for bringing to the modern stage a complete and effective blending of Cholom, Jagoi and even movements from the martial arts for giving expression to his creative works. The Triveni Ballet has travelled almost all over the world and received unstinted praise from connoisseurs and critics.

The lyrical quality, the supple and graceful elements of this form and the deep devotional import emphasizing the inner longing of the devotee for union with God entitle the Manipuri style of dancing to greater attention and popularity in the

outside world instead of being confined to a secluded and picturesque valley enclosed by mountain ranges.

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Ritualism and Dance in Ancient Karnataka — A Historical Survey

BY

Hema Govindarajan

It is a well established fact that the evolution, growth and development of fine arts (lalita-kala) in India have always had religious leanings. The Classical arts of music and dance have been conceived in a non-secular mould; and, since times immemorial, they have been associated with Indian spiritualism, with the need of the human soul for self-expression, with man's craving for the Ideal, with man's vision of the Infinite and also with his belief in the Supreme. Even in the most primitive of societies, dance was the prime expression of the religious beliefs and the ritualistic practices of the people; the ignorance of the primitive man and his incapacity to combat the furies of Nature prompted him to worship and propitiate these powerful forces with song and dance.

Origin-Rituals

This perhaps was the earliest indication that dance sprang forth from ritualism. Rituals also revolved around certain other activities of the primitive man. For instance his hunting expeditions were necessarily preceded or succeeded by celebrations of victory or jubilation and these celebrations included the performance of dance. Several facts attest the close connection between ritualism and dance from the earliest of times. In this essay I propose to survey the traditions of dance and its manifestations in ritualism as seen in Karnataka.

Prehistoric Rock Paintings

There are very early representations of ritualism in the art of dance in Karnataka. Some of the pre-historic rock paintings that have been discovered in the Neolithic and Megalithic sites of Tekkalakota, Sanganakallu, Maski, Piklihal, Hirebenkal and Anegondi in Karnataka show excellent representations of ritualistic dance. The rock paintings at Hirebenkal¹, Anegondi² and Tekkalakota³ show groups of dancing human figures, holding hands, sometimes standing near other animal figures. This is suggestive of some type of ritualistic dancing. They could be representations of war dance, or of hunting celebrations or even dancing before an animal sacrifice, thus symbolic of a ceremonial or a cult-worship. The rock paintings that have been found at Vonake Kindi near Cikkaramapura, Bellary District (Megalithic period) have similar representations of dancing figures with animal figures near by, which are further indications that right from pre-historic times, the dance traditions of Karnataka were deeply steeped in the concept of ritualism. This ritualism must have been in the nature of both religious ritualism as well as social ritualism. The rock paintings which depict group dancing could symbolise perhaps a representation of some social celebration or interaction, an expression of camaraderie and friendship in the primitive society. Thus

it could be assumed that the traditions of Classical Dance which evolved in the later historic times must have had their basis in these prehistoric dance traditions which were uncoded, unsystematised and mainly ritualistic in nature.

Purely Religious Origin

The religious motive of dance is clear from the fact that the classical treatises on the subject ascribe a divine origin to this art. The *Natyasastra* of Bharata Muni¹, which is the earliest extant treatise on the subject as well as most of the later texts which seek inspiration from this *magnum opus*, like the *Sangita Ratnakara* of Sarngadeva (13th century A.D.) and the *Abhinaya Darpana* of Nandikesvara (5th-13th century A.D.)² state that this art was the gift of Lord Brahma, the Creator, to the world of the Gods and the mortals and that it contains in it the essence of the Four Vedas. In fact, Lord Brahma calls it the 'Naty Veda'. Thus an intimate liaison existed between the dance tradition and the religious and ritualistic thought in India from the earliest of times.

In Karnataka also, the earliest traditions were ritualistic. Recorded history in Karnataka begins, so to speak, with the Satavahanas who ruled in parts of Karnataka even before the Christian era. The historical records of this period being few, it is difficult to trace the features of the contemporary dance traditions. However, the uncoded and crude forms of ritualistic dancing gradually set into definite moulds, the classical element creeping in, during this period.

In spite of the fact that the dance tradition evolved into a classical format in course of time, its religious and ritualistic intonations did not subside into the background. The Gangas of Talakadu ruled the Southern regions of Karnataka between the 4th and the 11th centuries A.D., and their records mention forms of ritualistic dancing which were done by the Kalamukha priests.³ There are also innumerable references in the contemporary literary and epigraphical sources to the performance of dance in the temples as a part of the ritualistic offering to the deity. Such evidences are available right from the epoch of the Calukyas of Badami (5th-7th centuries A.D.) and some of their inscriptions mention that grants were given to the women of the temples who performed such kind of dance during the ritualistic offerings.

Dance Ritual

The service of dance as a ritual in the temple was called as 'Rangabhoga'. Synonymously, terms like 'Rangapuje' and 'Rangarchana' were also used to describe this ritual. Dancing in the temple was mainly done to propitiate and to appease the deity in worship. The idea was not merely to pacify and please the Gods but also to seek their blessings. 'Rangabhoga' was also a means of entertaining the deities and consequently a source of education for the devotees who flocked to witness these Rangabhoga rituals.

In Karnataka, dance existed primarily as a ritualistic offering although its social, cultural and secular implications cannot

be totally denied. Extensive epigraphical data support this fact. The existence of dance as a temple ritual automatically implied the presence of dancers and musicians who were maintained as part of the temple staff. A record of the Ganga king Marasimha mentions a grant of land to five dancing girls who performed in the temple⁴. Similar references can be culled out from the later dynasties as well. An epigraph during the reign of the Rashtrakuta king Krishna II specifies a grant to a dancing woman who performed on the occasion when the temple deity was taken out in a procession.⁵ The inscriptions of the time of the Calukyas of Kalyana actually specify dance (*Nritya*) as being one of the Rangabhogas¹⁰. Dance as 'Rangapuje' was also done in the temples during the rule of the Seunas of Deogiri.¹¹ This tradition of ritualistic dancing continued even during the time of the Hoysalas, where it was known as 'Rangarchana'.¹²

Jains Too

Ritualistic dancing was not an exclusive feature of the Brahmanical temples alone. Several evidences of such dancing in the Jaina Basadis have been noted right from the time of the Gangas¹³ and the Rashtrakutas, both of whom did much to promote this religion. The infiltration of dance as a ritual in the Jaina scheme of worship is interesting because it shows the amount of sway that this ritualism exerted in course of time. The Manne Copper plates of the Rashtrakuta king Govinda III make a similar reference to dance (*Nritya*) being performed in the

Jaina Basadi at Manyapura.¹⁴ Not only was such ritualism seen in the Jaina Basadis, but it was also predominant in the minor religious sects which grew in Karnataka during the 10th-12th centuries. The *Sarvadasana Sangraha* of Madhavacarya states that one of the chief tenets of the Lakulisa Pasupata sect was the worship of the Lord with six kinds of oblations which included song and dance.¹⁵

Perani Dance

The Perani dance which is described in the *Sangita Ratnakara* of Sarngadeva,¹⁶ appears to be ritualistic in nature, for, while describing the Perani dancer, the text mentions that he must have his body smeared with white powder (ash), his head must be shorn except for a small tuft of hair and the anklets must be tied to his shanks.¹⁷ Although the description of the actual Perani dance is in keeping with the classical format, the dance seems to have religious and ritualistic flavour. This dance form is not discussed in the *Natyasastra* or in any of the earlier texts on dance; its elaborate discussion in the *Sangita Ratnakara* goes to prove that even the study of the ritualistic dances was being included in the classical fold in the later centuries. It was, however, categorised as a 'desi' (local, popular or regional) 'Paddhati' (tradition).

Ghost Worship

In the context of ritualism in religion and how it is manifested in dance, due attention must be given to the ancient concept of 'ghost-worship' through dance. This practice is very ancient and can be

traced to the pre-historic civilisations of Egypt and Sumer¹⁸. This was an elaborate ceremonial dance and it was performed as a ritual to placate the ghost (Bhuta) or the malevolent spirit, and to keep the ghost in good humour. As part of the ritual, one person would impersonate the ghost or the spirit to be placated and the others would sing and dance around him.¹⁹

Later centuries saw a further development in the ritualistic pattern and dancing as a ritualistic offering was done to animate living creatures besides the Gods. This formed perhaps part of 'totem-worship', the most common of which was worship of serpents and reptiles with dance. Devotees who offered prayers to the serpent (Naga) included dance (Nritya) and soon Naga-Nritya evolved as a prominent form of ritualistic dancing.²⁰

Increase in Dance as Ritual

Such examples of ritualistic dancing are numerous for gradually, in practically all the temples, the ritualistic part of worship increased the growth of the appropriate ritualistic dance routine. Its extensive popularity and widespread growth may be due to the fact that it was both visual (drśya) as well as audial (śravya,) and it reacted more acutely on the sensitivity and the sentiments of the people. In fact, even the secular dancing which was done in the royal courts and on occasions of social festivities included this legacy of religious ritualism in its presentation.

'Purvaranga'

This can be observed in the manuals of dance which prescribe a 'Purvaranga'

(preliminary) presentation in which the dancer evokes the Gods and prays to them for the success of her presentation. The practice of this 'Purvarangavidhi' in dance in Karnataka is widespread for it is described in most of the contemporary Kannada literature, when the poets describe a dance presentation. Pampa (10th century A.D.) in his 'Adi Purana' refers to the 'Purvaranga' done by Lord Indra before the Ananda Tandava (dance of joy) in honour of Adinatha on the occasion of his birth²¹. Nagacandra (12th century) in his 'Mallinathapurana' while describing an entire dance sequence describes this 'Purvaranga' ritual as well²². A similar mention of the 'Purvaranga' is made in the description of Lord Indra's dance on the occasion of the birth of Mallinathadeva.²³ This extensive record of the ritual of 'Purvaranga' in dance, in contemporary literature only adds to show how profoundly dance was submerged in ritualism.

Pushpanjali

As part of this 'Purvaranga' ritual the ritual of 'Pushpanjali' (offering of flowers, or Salutation with Flowers) usually followed. Most often the 'Pushpanjali' was included in the 'Purvaranga' scheme. Contemporary literature mentions the performance of 'Pushpanjali' whenever there is a reference to a dance presentation: Pampa,²⁴ Ponna,²⁵ Kanna,²⁶ Nagacandra²⁷ and Janna²⁸ make distinct note of this Pushpanjali' ritual.

The 'Purvaranga' and the 'Pushpanjali' can be considered as rituals because they are performed before the actual dance begins and on most occasions, behind the curtain.²⁹ This pattern of ritual in dance

was accepted as classical (margi) or as part of the Suddha Paddhati (pure tradition) and hence codified in the contemporary dance treatises.

The Religious Strand Strong

The traditions of dance as a ritual in temples as well as rituals in dance continued to proliferate in Karnataka even in the medieval and the modern times. The Vijayanagara Emperors, the Nayaks of Ikkeri and even the Wodeyars of Mysore worked for the cause of dance and for its promotion in all its facets. It must be

understood, however, that the very reason for this art to flourish inspite of the political vicissitudes is that it embodied a rich legacy of religion and ritual of the past; it imbibed a religious sanctity and a spiritualistic approach which has always remained undetachable. This art has evolved because of the ritualistic background from which it has sprung forth. To this day, inspite of the radical change in presentation and format, it still nurtures within itself the bias towards religion and ritualistic beliefs which are nothing but the heirlooms of its early conception.

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The Sabha's Special Activities

Bombay, Bastion of Culture

Bombay City and suburbs constitute a bastion of the classical performing arts. It is also the home of great causes, prospering or decadent. The Shanmukhananda Sabha, the Asthika Samajam, Sri Sankar Mutt, the Tamil Sangam and that inspiring edifice, the Subramanya Temple Complex at Chembur, stand as shining monuments to the crusading zeal of South Indians especially. Their antennae can always be stimulated to subtler vibrations of things. When convenor of the Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peeta Carnataka Sangeetha Seva Trust, Sri Lalgudi Jayaraman, visited Bombay and requested the premier Sabha viz., the Shanmukhananda Sabha, to take the lead in a collective effort for funds, a committee with Prof. T. V. Ramanujam as Chairman and Sri S. R. Kasturi as Vice-Chairman and consisting of representatives of other institutions was formed and set about its task in right earnest. The results are now there for all to see: a sum of over Rs. 3 lakhs was collected by means of a mini-festival and a Souvenir, the fruits of unstinted co-operation among the people of Bombay.

Mini Festival

The atmosphere of the mini-festival held on 13th, 14th and 15th April 1985 attended by milling crowds, took one's memory back to the colourful pageantry of the sixties when the great Hall was inaugurated. The stage decoration was a picture of elegance and beauty, the ornate mandap

at the centre exciting the curiosity and wonder of a trustee, himself architect of one of the great Sabhas of Madras. The coloured portraits of their Holinesses of the Kamakoti Peeta, with the Paramacharya shedding grace through his lustrous eyes, against the background of the rest of the stage, seemed like rainbow tints on falling spray. Add to all this the fact that 3 concerts viz. Sri Semmangudi's, Mandolin Srinivas' and the Lalgudi-Amjad Jugalbandhi hit peaks of excellence—true consummation of beauty and aesthetic fulfilment.

Some South Indian flavour was lent to the Festival by the presences of Shri G. K. Moopanar, the Congress-I, Secretary, Shri K. Rajaram, the Industries Minister of Tamil Nadu, besides of course our venerable President, Shri V. Subramaniam, Cabinet Minister of Maharashtra. They all graced the dais and garlanded the artists. One noted with satisfaction the presence of well-known representatives of other Sabhas too on the dais, side by side with the Shanmukhananda's representatives, such as Sarvashree (C. V. Radhakrishnan, P. N. Krishnamoorthy, Raman etc. indicating the co-operative nature of the effort to raise funds. The memorable occasion was notable for Shri Amjad Ali Khan being awarded the title “SAROD SAMRAT” and presented with a huge circular ornamented plate. Shri Amjad was overwhelmed by the gesture. Shri Lalgudi was of course the high priest of the 3-day festival. Some pics taken on the occasion are presented here. The Shanmukhananda

Sabha was the king-pin of the splendid endeavour and can feel very proud of its good offices in a great cause.

"SHANMUKHA"—A Ten Year Old

Handsome tributes were paid to the Editor and the publishers of "Shanmukha" at a function held on 14th April 1985, in the mini-auditorium of the Sabha at which President V. Subramaniam presided. Sri A. Kandaswami read the Messages wishing the function success. Speakers included that doyen of musicians, Dr. Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, the Violin maestro Padmasri Lalgudi Jayaraman, Sri K. P. Balakrishnan, News Editor of the "Times of India". Shawls and floral tributes were offered to the two distinguished musicians, while the Editor, Sri K.S. Mahadevan, was presented with a memento in sandalwood besides a shawl. All speakers underlined the fact that the Quarterly had maintained a high standard of instruction, decorum and dignity. Next morning, the "Times of India"

commended the dedication and zeal which the Editor had brought to bear on his onerous responsibilities and the Sabha to maintain and improve classical art traditions and noted that "it was a labour of love" for the Editor. Sri S. Seshadri, the energetic Vice President, and Convenor of the Magazine Committee, proposed a vote of thanks.

MDR's Portrait unveiled

Sangitha Kalanidhi K. S. Narayanaswamy, Principal of the Sabha's Vidyalaya, unveiled the portrait of the late M. D. Ramanathan, at the same function. In his brief remarks, the Principal recalled the salient and unforgettable features of MDR's music viz., his clarity of sahitya, the depth of his classical taste, his sonorously rich voice and not least, his extraordinary humility for a Vidwan of his class and calibre, a specialist in handling Vilambakala Kritis.



"Saraswathi" - An Exemplar

Perhaps alone amongst the many Chamber music organisations of Madras, "SARASWATHI" has a unique record of transmitting to the present and the future the glory, and radiance of composers like the Trinity, Narayana Theertha, Mysore Vasudevachar, Papanasam Sivan etc. Their great creations were after the manner born and not from acquired culture as is the case with later composers. Mr. N. V. Subramanyam, the moving force of "Saraswathi" could legitimately be proud of the record of his sabha when he announced at a recent meeting that "Saraswathi" had a tally of 52 demonstrations-cum-lectures during the year to its credit—an achievement indeed!

Mysore Vasudevachar

The occasion for celebrating the birth anniversary of Mysore Vasudevachar (14-5-1865) was the release by AVM Audios of a cassette containing a few kritis of that "Abhinava - Tyagaraja" (as he is appropriately named) recorded by that dedicated and complete artiste, Smt. Mani Krishnaswami. Smt. Rukmini Devi released the first cassette and nostalgically recalled the great days when "Pachchai Thatha", graced Kalakshetra and gave every ounce of his energy (although he was 88) to teaching Carnatic music to the students and composing songs for Kalakshetra's dance-dramas like Ramayanam. Smt. M. S. Subbulakshmi who received the first

cassette, in a brief speech paid her obeisance to Sri Vasudevachar, many of whose masterpieces she had learnt from him direct and had also sung in public. Dr. Sankara Menon and Sri N. R. Bhuvanarajan spoke with feeling about the artistically fruitful days, they had spent with the composer after he had joined Kalakshetra in 1953.

Smt. Mani Krishnaswami thereafter gave a two-hour recital of Vasudevachar's kritis, those wonderful fragments of the intense musical vision of this versatile composer. Mani brought out fully the boundless variety of artistic forms that Vasudevachar created, in her faithful but deeply felt and glowing interpretations of the Kritis, especially in ragas like Kharaharapriya, Jenjuti, Kapi, Purvikalyani, Abheri etc. It was relaxed melodic music stemming from an erudite yet reverent approach, since she had the privilege of learning directly from that great Vaggeyakara himself. It was an evening that evoked poignant memories of a great composer who lived long but very purposefully (1865 - 1961). "Saraswathi" and AVM Music Service and Mani Krishnaswami deserve our thanks for bringing to us the exquisite music of Vasudevachar.

Sri Narayana Theertha

Sri Narayana Theertha was one of those sage-artists who left the banks of Krishna and Godavari and settled on the

inspiring banks of the Cauvery in friendly environs promoted by the Maharashtra Rulers. Like Sadasiva Brahman and Sri Tyagaraja he was also a Telugu Brahmin, an Advaitin who composed the "Krishna Leela Tarangini", an epic written in perfect literary Sanskrit with songs (tarangas) replete with ideas from the Upanishads. Narayana Theertha's place in the history of Bhajana Sampradaya is unquestioned. Some of his compositions are heard in concerts from time to time. The Tarangini is composed as a regular dance-drama and at the festivals of Gokulashtami, his musical plays are rendered.

Sri Narayana Theertha settled in Varahur (1675-1750 A.D.) His samadhi is in Thirupoonthuruthi, a place seven miles east of Varahur. His Aradhana is being celebrated since a long time ago, but since 1965, the celebrations are being conducted on a large scale on the banks of the Kudamurutti river by a special committee of bhaktas. All India Radio gives some coverage to the annual aradhana programmes in which leading musicians,

Harikatha scholars, besides of course the Vedic scholars, take an active part.

"Saraswathi" has actively interested itself in the commemorative efforts of the Aradhana Committee and recently arranged a function at Mylapore in which Sri T. S. Parthasarathy and others spoke about Narayana Theertha and Sri Tirupoonthuruthi Venkatesan gave a creditable concert consisting only of Narayana Theertha's compositions. A special volume compiled by the Varahur Committee in co-operation with "Saraswathi" was also released. It contains pregnant articles by Sri B. Natarajan, Sri V.S.V. Guruswami Sastri-gal, Sri T. S. Parthasarathy, the Paramacharya, Dr. V. Raghavan etc., on the life and mission of Sri Narayana Theertha and is an authoritative source book of information on the saint.

"Saraswathi" deserves the thanks of all lovers of music and bhajana sampradaya for its expanding educative role. One hopes that the public would also extend to it enough financial assistance, the absence of which must necessarily cramp its present vigorous style of functioning.

Rama, The Lover Divine

(Tyagayya in Nayaka—nayaki Bhava)

I

Move not from me away, Ramayya,
Separation half minute even can I stand?
Oh, my delight, thou do I see
As the breath bound finds the pearl at last
Kalpaka shade art thou to me
This moment; as on a blazing day.
And the gold pot one comes by
Digging deep the earth.
Tend me well, for, this,
Tyagayya's body is yours.

(Kriti: "Nannu Vidachi"—Ritigowla)

II

Oh maid, my mind, bring him forthwith
My Lord, in redemption of fallen renown
And ever following the realised vasishta
In loveliness myriads of Cupid surpassed
Bring him, with regards loving. Oh maid
That my hands he may in compassionate
Love hold and grant felicity eternal,
One that has graced devoted Tyagayya.

[Kriti: "Chanithodi theve"—

(Harikambhoji)

III

How shall I, Sri Rama, bear, Rama?
And through how long? Woe is me!
He has left, gone, my beauteous Lord, Ha
Fondling, to his bosom clasping
Many a time, guarding me, consoling.
How chose he now me a stranger to make?
Filled with my words, sweetest, Oh Rama
Me unrivalled deemed I, and proud.
Ha, to think of it, ever holding
My hand and my weariness relieve!

[Kriti "Emani Vaikuntne"—Useni]

IV

Come, Come Sita's heart-delight
Come valiant, my hero, come
Unto me, a kiss bestow, Oh lotus-eyed!
In silken garments will I clothe thee
Embellish and close to my bosom hold.
In choice pearls and *thilak* adorn
Fortunate, stand I in love thine gained.
Who else to turn to but you?

[Kriti: "Rara Sita Ramania Manoharaa—
Hindola Vasantha"]

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Cultural Scene in Karnataka

By

T. B. NARASIMHACHAR

The major programme during this quarter was the 4-day Palghat Mani Iyer Memorial music festival arranged by the Memorial Art Centre. This year veteran mridangist Ramanathapuram C. S. Murugabhoopathi received the Mani Iyer Memorial award, consisting of Rs. 5,000 in cash, a shawl and citation, endowed by Sri K. K. Murthi in memory of his father late K. Puttu Rao, a great patron of music. The inaugural and Award function was held at the spacious Chowdiah Memorial hall followed by a delightful concert by Bombay Sisters. On other days there were music concerts at another venue. Murugabhoopathi gave glimpses of his greatness while accompanying on Mridangam Dr. Veena Doreswami Iyengar.

More significant was the endowment special lecture by Sri B. M. Sundaram of A. I. R., Pondy, on the great Laya vadyakaras in Carnatic music, of yesteryears, mentioning many illustrious names like Alaganambi, Narayanaswami Appa, Tukaram Appa, Tanjore Bhairava pillai, Tanjore Vaidyanatha Iyer, Kuttalam Kuppuswami pillai, Tanjore Ramadoss Rao, Palani Muthiah and his son Subrahmanya Pillai, Mysore Muthuswami Thevar-mridangists: Palani Krishna Iyer, Umayalpuram Kodandarama Iyer, Vilvadri Iyer, Alangudi Ramachandran (ghatam artistes) legendary Monmoondia pillai and Dakshinamurthi

Pillai (Kanjara and mridangam): Needaman-galam Meenakshisundaram, Ammachatram Kannuswami, Ammapettai Pakkiri, Vazhu-voor Muthuveera Pillay, Iluppur Panjami, Papanasam Sriman Pillai (the prefix Sriman given by the then Maharaja of Mysore) and Nachiarkoil Raghava Pillai.

Almost all of them were illiterate in the modern sense and not well versed in musical pedagogy but could on the spur of the moment improvise mind-boggling permutations and combinations, involving fractions and maintain perfect layakari. To many in the audience, these were mere names but some of the older generation could recapitulate in a nostalgic mood their own experiences with some or the other of these great masters. Mr. Sundaram referred to percussionists in the fields of Harikatha and Bharathanatyam and then the concert. Incidentally it may be mentioned that the Mani Iyer Art Centre's continued activities owe much to the untiring efforts of Bangalore K. Venkataram, the Executive Director and some patrons like Mr. K. K. Murthi.

Another body that has been very active during the current quarter is the Karnataka Sangita Nritya Academy. It held its annual Awards function on the 29th of March when the Governor of Karnataka presented the awards consisting of Rs. 5000/- cash, a shawl, a citation, a bronze Nataraja to

S. N. Mariappa (vocalist), T. S. Tatachar (violinist), Mruthyunjayaswami Puranik-mutt (Hind. Vocalist), G. S. Hire Mutt (Hind. Tabalji), Rajaratnam (dance guru) H. K. Narayana (Sugam Sangit), Hande Guru Vadevyasachar (Harikatha) and T. B. Narasimhachar (art critic).

There was a three-day Seminar on musical instruments of South India to assess the extent of their adequacy or otherwise to face the changing trends and discuss the steps to be taken to update them wherever necessary, by involving the practitioners, the manufacturers and music lovers, in a simultaneous purposeful dialogue. Many representing the latter participated in the seminar. On the concluding day the assembly discussed the current trends in the use of sophisticated electronic instruments and gadgets and their effects on the practitioners and listeners. Some felt that some of their limitations have to be overcome instead of condemning them as undesirable. The participation of T. Lokanatha Sarma, Director of Vadyalaya, Madras (many extinct instruments were displayed by the Vadyalaya) and S. Ramanathan (Ramji) of Tiruchi (manufacturer of musical instruments) invested the Seminar with a wider appeal by way of exchange of ideas and experiences.

In an eight-day series of illustrated programmes entitled 'Memory lingers on' highlighting the lives and achievements of some great composers and musicians of Karnataka, the local Bharathiya Vidya Bhavan enabled music lovers to understand and appreciate the roots of our culture in this state. The Bhavan continued its monthly series in order to invigorate music appreciation by arranging lecture

demonstrations by experienced musicians on specific ragas, by turns. The Bangalore station of A. I. R. heralded the advent of Spring (Vasanth Ruthu) by arranging a light music programme by popular artistes of Karnataka. This was followed by a similar programme by the local Doordarshan Kendra, at the Chowdiah Hall.

'Dancing Lines' was another interesting programme arranged by the Regional centre for R. and D. of the Academy under the inspiration of its Director Mr. B. V. K. Sastri. Dr. K. K. Hebbar, the eminent artist, did some 'On the spot' line drawing after witnessing a young dancer, Kum. Vatsala Kamat perform some Bharathanatyam items. The Centre also conducted a three-day voice culture workshop conducted under the guidance of Dr. Ashok Ranade of Bombay. This included an illustrated talk on the Dos and DONTs for vocalists in order to develop a refined and musical voice, involving the postures, the stances and breathing. The instructions were such as every vocalist-male and female-should observe for better effect-especially Carnatic musicians. The Academy also held a Youth music and dance festival for 11 days in which all the prize winners in the competition held by the Academy participated.

Mrs. Shakuntala Narasimhan of Bombay gave a very useful lecture-demonstration under the auspices of the Bharathiya Vidya Bhavan and the Research Centre of the Academy on 'Mutual influences in music (as between Carnatic and Hindusthani system, She being proficient in both the systems dealt with adaptation of many Ragas of each system by the other, while retaining the basic features of the respective systems.

Cultural Scene In Bombay

By
Sulochana Rajendran

A high point in the city's cultural scene during the quarter was the fabulous fund-raising efforts towards the renovation of the Carnatic Trinity's houses at Tiruvarur, to swell the coffers of the Kanchi Kamakoti Peeta Carnataka Sangeetha Seva Trust, instituted with the blessings of the Kanchi Paramacharya and entrusted to the care of violin nadopasaka Padma Sri Lalgudi Jayaraman, Bombay. Rasikas rose magnanimously by giving their mite. In return they had soul-filling music for three days at Shanmukhananda Hall, the variety and substantivity of which they would cherish long after the programme.

Trinity Festival

Septuagenarian Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer who is a tower of strength to the present-day tradition was featured on the opening day (Apr. 13) and he regaled us with his sangeetha of time-honoured grandeur. Next day was projected the latest sensation in the world of music, the prodigious Mandolin Mannan U. Srinivas. The common heritage of Indian music, its unity in diversity could not have been better brought out than in the Jugalbandi that Lalgudi and Amjad Ali Khan presented through their respective instruments, Violin and Sarod and systems of music, Carnatic and Hindusthani.

Mandolin Magnificent

The Shanmukhananda Sangeetha Sabha gave its members a magnificent

bonus during the month of May, presenting Master U. Srinivas. A total performer with supreme confidence and control over his medium, Srinivas has elevated a mere ensemble instrument of the West to the status of a classical solo in one of the unique systems of world music. No exaggeration, the Muse dances to his twang and the touch of his fingers, now subtly forging melodic cascades, now evoking deep emotion with heart-rending poignance or just prancing exuberantly on tone-colour variations. With immaculate sensitivity Srinivas brought about a blend of melodic grace, musical depth and tonal orchestration. Great music at once enthralling and evocative.

For so young an instrumentalist he could put you at ease with sahitya, without having to utter it though. The stance "Niddura niraagarinchi" he chose in "Kaddanuviriki" (Todi) for extemporisation on a niraval was an experience both for the artiste and his listeners. The Todi alapana itself left no one in doubt about the instrument's potential for Indian classical music and the artiste's capacity for fathoming the classical depths. His technical propensity in srutibeda apart, the Raga emerged in superb dimension and depth. Violinist Kanyakumari added her own lustrous deflections and delicate caresses.

If Kalyanavasantam and 'Nadaloludai' made another poignant essay in interpretation, the swaras added a glamorous facade. So was "Manavinalakincha" (Nalina-

kanthi) which projected a contrapuntal flamboyance and orchestral exuberance. The rare raga Sumukam, taken up for Ragam tanam Pallavi was no doubt a commendable venture capped with Ragamalika swaras that resulted in a colourful dialogue between Mandolin and Violin.

Srimushnam Raja Rao (Mridangam) and Govindarajan (Ghatam) accompanied with eclat to make it a memorable evening.

While one sat enraptured through the recital one could not help wondering if it wasn't time to advise the young Mandolinist to go slow on his penchant for technical excesses to avoid any regrets later.

The Bangalore Instrumental Trio

An instrumental trio from Karnataka arrested the connoisseur's attention (Shanmukhananda Sabha-monthly programme). B. N. Suresh, M. Nagaraj and Praveen in Venu-Violin-Mridangam ensemble forged not only a concert team spirit but also a concerted effort at treading tradition with reverence and restraint. Yielding to no youthful impulse, they showed an unhurried poise, a perception of sustaining aesthetics in performance.

There was enchantment in Hamsanadam (Bantureeti), evocation in Bilahari (Najeevadhara) and solemnity in Vagadeeswari (Paramathmudu). Hamsanandi (Paavanapura) stroked the heart strings while Khamas reflected sweet fragrance. Todi stood out in its soft, graceful reflections as a prelude to the grand edifice of Ragam Tanam Pallavi. Had not the Tanam been 'conditioned' to the percussion accompaniment, the number would have left

a lasting impress. the inherent laya in Tanam by itself Isn't inspiration enough? Any external 'aid' only tailors it to swaraprastharas. The Khanda Tripata Pallavi was well improvised, the Ragamalika Swaras imaginatively woven.

The other artiste the Sabha presented was Desikan, of the Madurai Mani Iyer School. More loyal than the king, he revelled in total imitation - in accent, vocal mannerisms and effects of the late maestro and naturally missed the 'spirit' and musical sensitivity of the Guru. The selections were all the favourites of the maestro and accompanists Tiruvellore S. Parthasarathy (Violin) and Tanjore Subramanian (Mridangam) toed his line keeping up the style lively.

Talented Tripurasundari

A senior artiste of Kalasadan, Tripurasundari, proved herself to be a danseuse of imagination and merit when she gave a Bharata Natya recital under the aegis of Bhulabhai Memorial Institute and Bombay (Tamil) Sangam (at the Sangam Hall in May).

In a repertoire that had scope for intense bhava and intricate nritya variations, the danseuse came out with polished grace, and rounded articulation with subtle dramatics.

Intensely evocative was her Nandanar excerpt "Vazhimaraikudu" (Bhairavi) where to the impact of visualisation was added the substantive aural dimension provided by Akila Raman. While the dancer herself experienced a certain exhilarating mood in "Baro Krishnayya", she had quite imaginatively captured the felod of resurgence and youth, in the Valli

Murugan encounter in "Tellathelinda-dayya".

A significant factor adding grandeur to the recital was Sharada's sustained Nattuvangam that had crispness and clarity.

New Talent

Among the young up-and-coming talents the Sabha has been from time to time encouraging, students of the Principal K. S. Narayanaswamy, C. V. Jayashree and Suguna Chandramouli, were given a rightful opportunity to perform in the mini-auditorium.

G. N. B. Day at Trivandrum

Sri Swati Tirunal Sangita Sabha, Trivandrum paid its homage to the glorious memory of G. N. B. by observing the "G. N. B. Day" in a grand scale on the 1st May 1985 at Karthika Tirunal Theatre, Trivandrum, the premises of the Sabha. Live recordings of the memorable concerts of G.N.B. were played from 10.00 a.m. in the morning to a packed house of aswadakas who could chew the cud of their nostalgic, sweet memories. These rare recordings were made available to the Sabha by Shri G. B. Duraiswamy, son of the doyen and Secretary of the G.N.B. Trust who also actively participated in the proceedings of the day. This programme went on till 5.00 p.m.

The commemoration ceremony started at 5.30 p.m. under the Chairmanship of His Highness Martanda Varma Elaya Raja the Patron-President of the Sabha. At this function, T. S. Vedagiri the biographer of G.N.B. delivered the commemoration

Their style emphasised the fact that where the twang softens, there surfaces musical grace in all its subtle clarity and aesthetic pulse. Both are talented recipients of Government scholarships and prizewinners at the A. I. R. competitions. True to their musical legacy, they showed grit and competence in keeping up the tradition built over the years by their mentors and families.

Equally talented Mridangists R. Venkateshwaran and P. Sridhar who are in demand at various city concert^s accompanied them.

address. Shri N. H. S. Mani, a member of the Managing Committee of the Sabha, presented a comprehensive paper bringing out the multi-faceted genius of G.N.B. as a performing musician, vaggeyakara and an ideal guru. Shri S. Natarajan, Secretary, proposed a warm vote of thanks, especially to Shri G. B. Duraiswamy who took considerable pains to come over to Trivandrum rendering his full cooperation to make the function meaningful, and presenting a full-size photograph of G.N.B.

This was followed by a delightful music concert by Shri Trichur V. Ramachandran, an eminent disciple of G.N.B. singing exclusively the compositions of his great guru. With accompaniments provided by Shri M. Chandrasekhar (violin) and Shri Umayalpuram Sivaraman (Mridangam), Shri Ramachandran brought out the rich variety and beauty of the musical genius of G.N.B.

S. NATARAJAN

Apurva Ragas Handled By Tyagaraja*

It is as an architect in the realm of melody and a creator of Apurva ragas that Tyagaraja has to be evaluated by the present generation. At the time when Tyagaraja was learning music, the environment around him was remarkably rich in the field of music. It was the Periclean age of Carnatic music.

Standards Set up

Veterans like Virabhadrayya had already set up conventions and standards for its systematic presentation. The Tanjore Court is stated to have had more than 300 musicians under its patronage and many of them had already proved their mettle both as performing artistes and as composers. It was in the midst of these giants that young Tyagaraja was called upon to make his grade.

It is well known that Tyagaraja's kritis are considered today as the most adequate interpretation of classical Carnatic music from both the music and the sahitya points of view. He has employed over 200 ragas and more than a hundred seem to be his own creations in the sense that his kritis are the earliest examples in those ragas.

Lakshyas

For many ragas, we have only his kritis as 'Lakshyas', as no composer before or after his time has attempted songs in them. In major ragas like Todi and Sankarabharanam, he has composed as

many as 30 pieces depicting the different facets of the raga without repeating the music. Even in ragas like Saveri, Saurashtram and Kalyani there are 20 songs and in Bhairavi and Madhyamavati, upto 15. But these are old and time honoured ragas handled by many pre-Tyagaraja composers.

'Apurva Ragas'

The word 'apurva' denotes something not preceded, not having existed before and hence quite new. An 'apurva' raga need not necessarily be a small janya raga. After the adumbration of the 72 melakarta scheme by Venkatamakhi new full scale parent ragas, which were not in existence before, came into play and these should also be classified as apurva ragas. All ragas containing *vivadi swaras*, with the exception of Nata and Varali, come under this category. Nata, with its *shatsruti ri* and *shatsruti dha*, and Varali, with its *suddha ga* and *tivra ma*, were in existence even before Venkatmakhi's time.

It is well known that Ramaswami Dikshitar, the father of Muthuswami Dikshitar, secured a copy of Venkatamakhi's Chaturdandi Prakasika, from a descendant of Venkatamakhi whom he met at Manali, near Madras. The treatise had been lying underground for a century and a half and no composer had made use of it. It was left to Muthuswami Dikshitar to take upon himself the task of composing kritis to give body and shape to the mela and janya ragas described by Venkatamakhi.

Tyagaraja, however, does not appear to have come under the influence of Venkatamakhi but followed the 'Sangraha Chudamani' of Govinda, wrongly called Govindacharya. This musicologist was a palace Vidvan of the Tanjore Court during the Maratha regime and presented, in his book, his scheme of 72 melas and the 294 janya ragas, the aroha and avaroha of which have been given by him in the body of the work. By studying these lakshana gitas carefully, any talented musician can bring out the form of the raga concerned and it must have been child's play for a genius like Tyagaraja to have woven those wonderful melodies of his from the lakshana gitas.

His Unique Stamp

But Tyagaraja puts his own indelible stamp on each of the apurva ragas he handles. The opening phrase of the kriti itself brings out the raga in such a way that it cannot be confused with any other raga even by a novice. Thus, Charukesi, which (roughly stated) is a combination of Sankarabharanam in the lower tetrachord and Todi in the upper, is often referred to as Sankara Todi. But the opening phrase of 'Adamodi galade' by Tyagaraja commencing with *pa, da, pa, pa, pa, ma, ga*, with *suddha dhaivata* after the *panchama*, rules out all confusion. The Bahudari kriti 'Brovabharama' starts with a jerk *pa, dha, ni, pa, pa, ma, ma, ga*, which immediately establishes the identity of the raga, while a later piece, 'Sadananda Tandavam' by another composer starts with *pa, pa, pa, ma, ma, ga, ga, ga* which can lead us to any other raga. Tyagaraja had the uncanny knack of getting at the

soul of a raga which often eluded many lesser composers.

Selective Approach

But Tyagaraja has been very selective in adopting apurva ragas from the "Sangraha Chudamani" and has not composed in all the melakarta and janya ragas enumerated therein. His touchstone appears to have been the symmetry of the raga and its aesthetic appeal. For example, he has not handled ragas like Ghanasyamala, Sringerini, Bhogi and Dipara but has composed in Vanaspathi, Rasali, Manavati, and Manoranjani which are quite close to the former. He has concentrated on rakti or ranjana, and to use his own words 'ranjimpa chese ragambulu.

Let us take a few examples of symmetrical ragas. Symmetry lies in omitting one swara in one tetrachord in the aroha and another swara in the other tetrachord in the avaroha. Kannadagaula omits *dha* in the aroha and *ri* in the avaroha. Ranjani omits *ni* in the aroha and *ri* in the descent. Some ragas have sampurna aroha and an audava avaroha (like Saramati) or an audava aroha and a sampurna avaroha (like Abheri). The starting points in kritis in such ragas make an interesting study, and reveal the genius of the composer e.g. "Mokshamu galada" and "Nagumomu".

A Great Experimenter

Tyagaraja must have made endless experiments although the hard work put in by him is often ignored by his biographers who attribute his output to divine inspiration alone. Inspiration was there of course but his own endeavours should

*Paper presented by T. S. Parthasarathy at the Music Seminar II held on 9th & 10th February 1985 at the Sabha, Bombay.

not be belittled. In some cases the svaras in the aroha and avaroha by themselves have been set up as the pallavi of a kriti e.g. in Bhinnashadja, the notes *sr gr p m p n s* and *s d p m g r s* have been set up as 'Sarivarilona chauka salaga'. In Svaravali, the ascent *s m g m p n d n s* becomes the pallavi of 'Prarabdha mitlundaga'.

The manner in which Tyagaraja has woven immortal melodies out of scales like Dhenuka, Vakulabharanam, Suryakantam, Gaurimanohari is breathtaking. It is well-known that Harikambhoji and Kharaharapriya are Tyagaraja's great gifts to Carnatic music. Let us take the example of kriti "Muddu Momu" in Suryakantam.

Prati Madhyama Ragas

Compared to Suddha madhyama ragas, prati madhyama ragas are less in number and in the "Sangraha Chudamani" they occupy only 90 pages as against 200 occupied by Suddha madhyama ragas. The reason is that after the water-tight bifurcation of melas into Suddhamadhyama ones and Pratimadhyama ones in the Venkatmakthi scheme, many Prati madhyama melas became just the counter-

parts of the Suddha madhyama ones without any traditions of practical usage. For example, the prati madhyama counterpart of a major raga like Todi is the less known Bhavapriya which came into life with Tyagaraja's 'Srikanta niyeda' without any trace of Todi. Other examples of this type are Shanmukhapriya, Simhendramadhyamam in both of which Tyagaraja did not compose.

Original Creations

There are certain ragas handled by Tyagaraja which are not found in the "Sangraha Chudamani" e.g. Gundakriya, Bindumalini, Malayaamarutam, Chittaranjani, Kokilavarali etc. We do not know how Tyagaraja came by these ragas. These like raga Suposhini may be his own creations.

Since Tyagaraja's time, numerous composers have handled apurva ragas with varying degrees of success and some of them have done really well. But Tyagaraja, though not the first to compose in apurva ragas, stands as a beacon to guide composers, for all time to come.

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Sri Swati Tirunal Festival Turns A New Leaf

By

S. Natarajan, Trivandrum

VAISAKHA (April-May) is a glorious month for Indian music. It marks the birth of one of the greatest musical geniuses of the country, Maharaja Swati Tirunal, who was an outstanding composer of Indian music and a liberal patron of literature and fine arts with few parallels in the history of this country. He is perhaps the only 'Vaggeyakara' in India who composed 'Kritis' not only in the Carnatic system, but also in all the styles in Hindustani system of music of his times: Dhrupad, Khayal, Tapa and Tumri. He patronised liberally eminent musicians, dancers and painters from Kanyakumari to Kashmir who flocked to his court at Trivandrum. Thus he had achieved a level of cultural integration of the country so lofty that, even today when we indulge in lots of wishful thinking, it belongs to realms beyond the reach of our dreams. The greatness of his achievements about two centuries ago is heightened by the fact that he was but the Ruler of a small princely state in the southernmost tip of this vast country.

Vice-President Inaugurates Festival

The Sri Swati Tirunal Sangita Sabha, Trivandrum organized a grand and colourful ten-day festival to celebrate the 172nd birth anniversary of this great genius, on a scale unprecedented in the history of this capital city. The Festival was inaugurated on the 4th of May 1985 by no less a person than the Vice-President of India, Shri R. Venkataraman, a connoisseur of music

and fine arts, at a function presided over by Shri P. Ramachandran, Governor of Kerala. Shri Venkataraman also released a special souvenir of the Sabha at this function by handing over a copy to Shri T. S. Parthasarathy, Secretary, Madras Music Academy, to mark the occasion. The Vice-President remarked that Swati Tirunal was a prince among composers and a composer among princes. He emphasised the need for a proper interaction in the field of classical music between the South and the North. He would like to see at least one composition of Maharaja Swati Tirunal sung in all the music concerts taking place in any part of the country to propagate his glorious compositions.

At this function, Shri P. Ramachandran, Governor of Kerala, released the book "Swati Tirunal Compositions" containing 7 Tana varnas and 19 Pada Varnas of the Maharaja brought out by Dr. Gouri Kuppuswamy & Dr. M. Hariharan of the Department of Music, Mysore University by handing over a copy to Dr. S. Ramanathan.

Highlights of Concerts

The ten-day music festival presented several eminent maestros of Carnatic music including Maharajapurogam Santanam, Madurai G. S. Mani, D. K. Jayaraman, M.S. Gopalakrishnan, V. V. Subramaniam, M.K. Kalyanakrishna Bhagavatar (Veena), T. K. Govinda Rao, Padmasree Palghat

Raghu, Tanjore Upendran and Sreemushnam Raja Rao (Mridangam) as well as the reputed vocalist Pt. Jitendra Abhisheki who did a concert exclusively on the Hindustani compositions of the Maharaja; the top-notch Banares-based violinist Dr. N. Rajam who was ably supported by her daughter Sangita. Besides, outstanding local artists Prof. Omanakutty, Palkulangara Ambika Devi, Visalom Venkitachalam (Vocal), K. S. Gopalakrishnan (Flute), Dr. Chalakudy Narayana swamy, B. Sasikumar, K. Venkitachalam (Violin), Prof. Mavelikkara Velukutty Nair B. Doraiswamy (Mridangm) also performed in this Festival,

Only Swati Tirunal Compositions were rendered in the concerts. The artistes took care to see that there was no repetition of the same 'kriti' in their concerts which therefore afforded a rich variety to these concerts. This made it possible for the listeners to listen to more than seventy five compositions of the Maharaja. Further one day was exclusively devoted in this Festival for the local Sangita vidwans, vidushis and music students to pay homage to Sri Swati Tirunal by rendering two of his compositions each, from 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. on that day. Though all the concerts kept a uniformly high standard, some deserve special mention. Maharajapuram Santanam in his inimitable style presented famous Swati Tirunal compositions in the ragas Hamsadhwani, Pantuvarali, Arabhi, Todi, Kalyani and Saveri. His detailed delineation of the ragas Kalyani and Todi was superb and the novel presentation of the ragamalika kriti "Bhavayami Raghuramam" as a pallavi with the swara prasthara in the different ragas was a pleasant surprise to the packed

audience in the Karthika Tirunal Theatre. Very aptly he concluded his concert with the Hindustani composition of the Maharaja in raga Vrindavani evoking the subtle bhava of this piece to perfection. The splendid violin support provided by "M. S. G." heightened the quality of this concert to high levels, with Tanjore Upendran also giving a good account of himself in the Mridangom.

The exposition of Hamsanandi by Madurai G. S. Mani, who is endowed with a rich voice, was unique and brilliant and his rendering of "Sankara Sri Giri" brought forth all the beauty of that 'kriti'. His Charukesi was equally superb. He was ably supported on the violin by Tiruparkadal Veeraraghavan. The rare combination of Sreemushnam (Mridangam) and V. Nagarajan (Ganjira) afforded a delightful experience to the audience.

Rare Kriti rendered

By a happy coincidence, the veteran T. K. Govinda Rao and Prof. Omanakutty presented two of the same kriti, viz. the Varna "Dani Samajendra" in Todi and the rare piece 'Rasa Vilasa' in Khamboji. "Dani Samajendra" in Govinda Rao's "Bani" gave an elegant visual picture of that varna and both the artistes could bring out the exquisite beauty of the Khamboji Keertana very well.

To appreciate the variety and richness of the 'bhava' in the Hindustani compositions of Sri Swati Tirunal, one should listen to the doyen Abhisheki. It is a sad fact that these kriti are often getting mutilated in the hands of Carnatic musicians. Abhisheki's presentation of these kriti helped a correct reassessment of the

supreme position of Sri Swati Tirunal among the Hindustani music composers. Abhisheki's exquisite presentation was ably supported on the violin by one of the outstanding young talents in Kerala, B. Sasikumar.

Symposium on Swati's Songs

A noteworthy feature of this festival was an informative symposium organized on the 5th May and chaired by Dr. Sooranad Kunjan Pillai in which eminent musicologists and erudite scholars like T. S. Parthasarathy (Secretary, Madras Music Academy), Dr. S. Ramanathan, Pt. Jitendra Abhisheki, V. Madhavan Nair (Mali), Dr. Gouri Kuppaswamy and Dr. M. Hariharan of the Department of Music, Mysore University and Dr. S. Bhagyalekshmy presented papers on the genius of Sri Swati Tirunal. Dr. S. Ramanathan gave a brilliant demonstration which brought out the richness and variety of the compositions of the Maharaja. Similarly the demonstrations of Dr. Gouri Kuppaswamy, Dr. M. Hariharan and Dr. Bhagyalekshmy on the rare compositions and the manipravala kriti of the Maharaja were also delectable and instructive.

The Mullamood Tradition

The organizers of this Festival can really be proud for successfully presenting on the stage for the first time the various time-honoured rituals and traditions in music established by the great Swati Tirunal and practised exclusively within the precincts of the Sri Padmanabhaswamy temple and the Navaratri Mandapam. One such tradition, which still continues unabated, is that of the Mullamoodu Bhagavatars. The group of these traditional

musicians performs the Utsava Prabandha Keertanas of the Maharaja specially composed for the purpose of singing during the Sree Bali procession in the temple on every day of the two annual festivals in the Sri Padmanabhaswamy temple. Also, before the main concert at the Navaratri Mandapam (during the annual Saraswathi Pooja) they sing every day the Todaya Mangalam composed by the Maharaja with "tanam" rendering. During this year's Festival of the Sabha, it was a pleasant experience to the rasikas most of whom have had no earlier opportunity, to get a taste of the pristine beauty of this traditional rendering of the Mullamoodu Bhagavatars. It was the chorus rendering of this group that used to give an auspicious start to the evening's programme on all days during the festival. Sri Swati Tirunal had introduced certain rituals for the performance of the Nagaswaram instrument in the temple. The instrument itself is known the 'Timiri Nagaswaram (Kurunkuzhal)' of a shorter variety capable of producing 'swaras' of high pitch and long range. For the regular poojas and especially for the Sree Bali procession during the annual festival in the temple, the Maharaja had stipulated specific Varnas and Keertanas to be performed in this instrument. This special Nagaswara Seva, which was for the first time presented outside the Sri Padmanabhaswamy temple made the inaugural function of the festival auspicious; later, it was presented in a three-hour exclusive programme on another day during the Festival.

Nava Vidha Bhakti

The Nava Vidha Bhakthi Malika or Nava Ratna malika is a group of nine brilliant compositions of Sri Swati Tirunal

on the nine aspects of devotion to the Lord glorified in Srimad Bhagavatam. These kritis epitomise his "Bhakthi Man-jari", a superb poetical work in Sanskrit. Despite their rich musical quality, only two or three of these compositions are in popular practice now. It was a praise-worthy attempt on the part of the Sabha to have initiated an earnest attempt to popularise all the nine compositions by presenting them in choral rendering by a group of talented local Sangita Vidwans and Vidushis under the leadership of Prof. Vechoor Hariharasubramonia Iyer. This large group of about thirty artistes had rigorous practice for several days on, for familiarising themselves with these compositions. And their efforts did yield rich rewards. It was a rare treat that the Rasikas will like to keep alive long in their sweet memories. Well done, Vechoor.

Two programmes of the festival stand in a class of their own: the concert of

Mullamoodu Harihara Bhagavatar and the Sopana Sangeetam of Njeralathu Rama Poduval. In Harihara Bhagavatar's rendering, the Swati kritis came to life in their original, pristine 'Bani', some of which had lost their form and shape in the hands of Sangita Vidwans who missed the vitality of the kritis in their pursuit of ornamentation. Njeralam with his sonorous and rich voice, singing to the accompaniment of the mellifluous 'Edakka' (the percussion instrument) evoked nostalgic feelings of Kerala's by-gone, glorious and unique heritage of music rendering.

One would heartily join with the organizers in their hope that the annual Swati Festival would, ere long, grow into a National Festival of the scale and grandeur of other Music Festivals such as the Tansen Sangeet Sammelan (Gwalior) and the Sadguru Tyagaraja Aradhana (Tiruvavayaru).

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